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Chairman: Mr. Bernardini (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Italy)

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In the absence of Mr. Balarezo (Peru), Mr. Bernardini (Italy), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 85: Sustainable development (*continued*) (A/C.2/59/L.34)

(b) Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

Draft resolution on promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area in the context of sustainable development (A/C.2/59/L.34)

1. **Mr. Ramsden** (New Zealand) said that consultations on the draft resolution, which he had facilitated, had achieved consensus on all paragraphs except the fourteenth preambular paragraph, an exact replica of the fourteenth preambular paragraph of the previous resolution on the issue, 57/261.

2. **The Chairman** said that the representative of the United States of America had requested a recorded vote on the fourteenth preambular paragraph.

3. **Mr. Hackett** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama, expressed concern over the request for a separate vote on the fourteenth preambular paragraph, noting that an identical preambular paragraph had been agreed and adopted without a vote by the General Assembly in its previous resolutions 54/225, 55/203 and 57/261 on promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area in the context of sustainable development. That paragraph dealt with the vulnerability of Caribbean countries to the increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters. CARICOM had hoped that delegations would have displayed some sensitivity and solidarity with the peoples of the Caribbean on that issue, particularly after the destruction caused by the recent hurricane season throughout the region. The hurricanes had left a heavy death toll in their wake, destroyed or damaged about 90 per cent of the houses in Grenada, leaving some 50 per cent of that island's population homeless. He hoped that delegations would vote for that preambular paragraph.

4. **Mr. Al-Athba** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said it was regrettable that a vote had been requested on the fourteenth preambular paragraph, particularly given the extensive damage caused by the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean region. He urged delegations to vote in favour of that preambular paragraph.

5. **Ms. Tamlyn** (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that her delegation would vote against the fourteenth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution. The text was scientifically inaccurate and misleading and there was insufficient evidence to indicate a trend towards increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as hurricanes, droughts and floods, or of natural disasters worldwide. The consequences of those events had increased owing to a variety of factors, not the events themselves.

6. While her delegation understood the concerns of Caribbean States and recognized that 2004 in particular had seen increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including the recent spate of hurricanes and associated disasters in the Caribbean, evidence did not support a statement that that was part of a long-term trend. Rather, evidence suggested that it was part of the natural cycle of inter-decadal variability. Moreover, the language implied a causal link between climate change and current extreme weather events, while in reality that link was uncertain. The preambular paragraph also failed to deal adequately with the various causes of vulnerability.

7. The United States had offered an alternative text that recognized the recent disasters in the Caribbean, but sought to limit the conclusions to those that could be justified on the basis of current knowledge. In particular, it had sought to correct the ambiguity over the role of climate change, as opposed to climate variability, in recent events. Nevertheless the United States shared the concerns of the Caribbean States regarding the consequences of those events. On 10 November, her Government had announced the distribution of assistance totalling $100 million for the countries most severely affected by hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne, in addition to the approximately $19 million in assistance it had already disbursed.

8. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia.

Against:

United States of America.

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Japan.

9. *The fourteenth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.34 was adopted by 121 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions.*

10. **Mr. Herrera de Abreu** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) expressed reservations with respect to the sixth and twenty-fifth preambular paragraphs and paragraph 4, which referred expressly to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. His country was not a party to the Convention and the norms in that Convention under international customary law were not applicable to it, except for those that it had expressly accepted or would accept in future by incorporating them in its domestic legislation. However, given his country's historical solidarity with its neighbours in the Caribbean, it had voted for the draft resolution.

11. *Draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.34 was adopted.*

12. *Draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.17 was withdrawn.*

Agenda item 44: Information and communication technologies for development (A/59/80-E/2004/61, A/59/80/Corr.1-E/2004/61/Corr.1, A/59/207, A/59/563 and A/C.2/59/3)

Agenda item 92: Training and research

(a) United Nations Institute for Training and Research (A/59/14 and A/59/150)

(b) United Nations University (A/59/31 and A/59/566)

13. **Mr. Khan** (Executive Coordinator, Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and Director, Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) introduced the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on the first phase and progress in the preparations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (A/59/80-E/2004/61 and Corr.1). The World Summit, held in Geneva in December 2003, had been designed to provide a global platform for all stakeholders — Governments, United Nations agencies, the private sector and civil society — to develop a common vision and understanding of the evolving information society. The core outcome of the first phase of the Summit was contained in two basic documents — a declaration of principles and a plan of action — both of which recognized that building an inclusive, universal and development-oriented information society was vital for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

14. To move forward beyond Geneva, the declaration of principles and plan of action called on the Secretary-General to establish a working group on Internet governance and a task force on financial mechanisms to bridge the digital divide. The international community had shown great interest in the preparations for the second phase of the Summit, to be held in Tunis

in November 2005. The momentum, goodwill and consensus that had been gained among stakeholders during that first phase in Geneva must be sustained. The United Nations was committed to supporting the second phase and would work with the ITU Task Force and the host country to make the Tunis Summit a success. Furthermore, it was important for Governments and other stakeholders to recognize the close links between the Millennium Development Goals and the review of the Millennium Declaration to be conducted at the 2005 General Assembly high-level event and the Tunis Summit. A truly inclusive and universal information society could not be built without accelerating development and reducing poverty; information and communication technologies could play a crucial role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The two summits were not only chronologically close to each other but were intertwined in their overall objective. Therefore, the multi-stakeholder character of that enterprise must be preserved so as to build a truly global partnership placing information technology at the service of development and poverty eradication. Leaders of government, the private sector and civil society must therefore demonstrate their continuing commitment by participating in the Tunis phase at the highest level to cement the global partnership for development with information and communication technology as the strategic instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

15. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Information and communication technologies for development: progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/295" (A/59/563), he said that the United Nations had taken a major step forward during the past year in developing a viable and practical system-wide information and communication technologies strategy, and in defining a road map for implementing it. The ambitious goal was to transform the United Nations system into a genuine knowledge-based family of organizations, by ensuring coherence of the policy advice that organizations of the system provided to countries in setting comprehensive, forward-looking strategies to harness information and communication technologies for economic and social progress. Information and communication technologies offered unprecedented opportunities for system-wide knowledge and knowledge creation.

16. The United Nations information and communication technologies strategy must enhance the Organization's effectiveness and capacity to support countries in using information and communication technologies to achieve the Millennium Goals. The strategy had been developed to harness the power of such technologies, enhance standardization and harmonize investment in providing services to Member States. An integral part of the strategy was the United Nations ICT Charter (A/59/563, annex I).

17. **Mr. Jayaweera** (Director, Communication Development Division, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) introduced the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on communication for development programmes in the United Nations system (A/59/207). The role of communication in development was to make people conscious of the reality of their situation and aware that they had the power to change it. All development programmes must be transparent and accountable to the intended beneficiaries through a vigorous civil society, which must be empowered to articulate its interests and participate in policy formulation and programme implementation.

18. Communication for development involved building people's capacity to process vital information through a range of interdependent channels — from interpersonal communications at the grass-roots level to diverse and pluralistic media at the local and national levels. That involved designing strategies to accelerate grass-roots participation in democratic governance and creating an enabling environment for free and pluralistic media to investigate diverse development issues, including that of meeting the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals.

19. Noting that addressing the information and communications needs of the poor and marginalized was an important component of a wider strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion, he said that access to communication media, especially for underserved and marginalized groups, must be increased. Lastly, he drew attention to the conclusions and recommendations of the report.

20. **The Chairman** requested further information on the Global Forum scheduled to be held during the seventh meeting of the United Nations ICT Task Force in Berlin. He was particularly interested in knowing what expectations the Task Force had for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and how the Forum would contribute to that process.

21. **Mr. Khan** (Executive Coordinator, Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and Director, Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Global Forum would be held in conjunction with the biannual meeting of the Task Force in November 2004. The Forum was open to all sectors and stakeholders throughout the world and had already received tremendous support. Some 500 participants, representing the private sector and business communities, civil society, and policy makers from developed and developing countries were expected to attend. Discussions would be held on the promotion of a domestic and international enabling environment for ICT for development, particularly in terms of the promotion of investment in the ICT sector and ICT for development projects in developing countries.

22. Following the November events, the Task Force also intended to launch initiatives at the national, subregional and regional levels, in association with international institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank, together with regional commissions and private sector companies, among others. Those initiatives would entail training, raising awareness of regulatory and policy issues and institutional capacity-building in developing countries over the following two years, and were expected to make a direct contribution to the implementation of the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit in Geneva.

23. In addition, the Task Force would arrange a series of forums on Internet governance worldwide so that the views of participants from all regions could be presented to the working group on Internet governance and the ICT Task Force at the second preparatory meeting in February 2005.

24. **Mr. Boisard** (Executive Director, United Nations Institute for Training and Research) said that activities of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) during the period under review had increased to some 150 programme workshops or seminars annually, benefiting almost 8,000 participants throughout the world. Most activities had been geared towards social and economic development, followed by international affairs management and multilateral diplomacy. After its first year in existence, the UNITAR Hiroshima Office for Asia and the Pacific (HOAP) already had a well-established reputation in the region, and a projects bureau had been recently opened in Tajikistan. UNITAR was financially stable: programmes funded through special purpose grants fared far better than those that had been funded through voluntary contributions.

25. He took the opportunity to describe three ongoing programmes that reflected the action-oriented philosophy guiding the work of UNITAR: response to precisely defined needs, systematic pursuit of inter-agency cooperation, and harnessing of the flexibility and innovative nature of the Institute. The programmes also demonstrated UNITAR's operational strategy of consolidating rather than expanding programmes and placing greater emphasis on quality than on quantity.

26. With regard to training and capacity-building in chemicals and waste management, the Institute had developed a methodology for national profiles to pinpoint elements that undermined the implementation of the decisions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. That methodology had been accepted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other major international bodies, and a training curriculum had also been devised to help developing countries in the formulation of action plans. The Institute was actively engaged in the international analysis of lessons learned in capacity-building for sound chemicals management and had adopted the approach of using synergies created between various international legal instruments.

27. UNITAR had spearheaded a national capacity-building programme for the management of climate change action plans, in close cooperation with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and an expert group representing the least developed countries, with the backing of several donors.

28. The second programme, described in paragraphs 24 to 26 of document A/59/14, had been launched for briefing and debriefing Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General, and had been established to impart valuable lessons and experiences of senior personnel who had served in equivalent capacities. The project had been undertaken in close

cooperation with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs, with the participation of high-level officials of the United Nations system.

29. The third programme related to Type II Partnerships, as conceived at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Institute had developed a training network of local actors within a decentralized cooperation programme involving intergovernmental organizations, State contributors, world and regional associations of local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (document A/58/817) had explicitly recommended training of personnel under the auspices of UNITAR.

30. As a corollary to those training programmes and capacity-building, UNITAR and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) had launched a study focusing on access to basic services, for which a number of consultations had been held. The resulting work was expected to make an important contribution to the Governing Council of UN-Habitat and to the Commission on Sustainable Development, with the possibility of later consideration by the Economic and Social Council and the Millennium +5 Summit. Cooperation in that area should contribute to greater awareness of the problem of access to basic services, the adoption of regulatory measures and firm and immediate steps to improve living conditions for the most disadvantaged population groups.

31. It was common knowledge that the shortcomings of the Institute were attributable to the excessively low level of voluntary contributions to the General Fund, which was already burdened by high rental and maintenance costs. He appealed to Member States to endorse UNITAR's request to the Fifth Committee for the provision of rent-free premises in New York and Geneva, and also to consider increasing their contributions to the General Fund.

32. **Mr. van Ginkel** (Rector, United Nations University), illustrating the continuing development of the United Nations University (UNU) as a think tank for the United Nations system, said that UNU had received increasing recognition for its work, particularly with respect to research and capacity-building. Elaborating on part II of the Report of the Council of the United Nations University, contained in document A/59/31, he reviewed achievements in the University's main areas of focus: peace and governance and environment and sustainable development. Among the key projects launched in 2004, he mentioned a number of studies on various aspects of human security and development, such as the effects of the Iraq conflict, globalization processes and international accountability and justice, and a series of projects of topical relevance such as sustainable land management, water environment and health, and natural resources management.

33. Several activities in capacity-building and institutional development, communications and outreach had been undertaken by UNU in collaboration with major international organizations and academic and research institutions. The University had worked to enhance internal and external communications by strengthening its staffing in the sector and by achieving a high level of media and online visibility.

34. The University had continued to make progress in strengthening the quality, relevance and outreach of its research and capacity development activities. The collective efforts of the UNU Centre, its research and training centres, programmes and the broad network of cooperating and associated institutions would continue to be directed at the problems that constituted the core concerns of the United Nations and Member States.

35. **Mr. Ge** Songxue (China) said that UNU had contributed to the realization of the major goals of peace, environmental protection and sustainable development by developing networks inside and outside the United Nations system to foster academic exchanges on topics of concern to the Organization. China had always supported and cooperated with the United Nations University, and the University's International Institute for Software Technology had been established with the support of his country. China hoped that the partnerships established by some of its national academic institutions with the University would continue to develop.

36. New challenges and obstacles would arise in the pursuit of peace, development and cooperation. The United Nations University would need to strengthen interaction with other bodies of the United Nations system and make an even greater contribution to the work of the United Nations. At the same time, the University should continue to ensure the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of its activities.

37. **Mr. Lolo** (Nigeria) welcomed the steady progress UNITAR had made to fully regain its place in the United Nations system. It should continue to expand the scope of partnerships with other entities in the United Nations system. The Institute should provide a range of training programmes and activities with emphasis on developmental issues and the management of international affairs.

38. It was regrettable that the Institute's core finances remained poor. Funding for the Institute came primarily from donations, voluntary contributions and earmarked special purpose grants. Very few Member States contributed to the General Fund and beneficiaries of the Institute's programmes included countries that had withdrawn their financial support for one reason or the other. Countries that had yet to contribute, or had not resumed their contributions, should consider contributing to UNITAR in response to the Secretary-General's recommendation. UNITAR would be in a better position to offer quality service to Member States once outstanding issues of rent, debt and maintenance cost had been resolved. UNITAR should have the same benefits of free rent and maintenance costs as the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

39. **Mr. Hachani** (Tunisia) said that the development of information communication technologies had not always been a vehicle of shared growth. The digital divide, which was symptomatic of a global environment suffering from various economic, social, political and cultural dysfunctions, was the most endemic expression of poverty. When information and communication technologies were used advisedly and adapted to local conditions, they stimulated economic and human development and created possibilities for partnerships and investment. The integration of such technologies as strategic instruments of development was thus more essential than ever.

40. Tunisia had initiated the World Summit on the Information Society and it was convinced that the Summit would constitute an international response to the digital divide. The World Summit was a historic opportunity for the international community to place the digital divide within the framework of a strategic partnership favouring economic growth, human development and a dialogue between civilizations.

41. The convening of the Summit in two phases, by Switzerland, a developed country, and Tunisia, a developing country, was itself symbolic, since the sharing would send a message of solidarity. It also suggested the idea of a bridge between two levels of development and between two digital realities, and a crossroads of diverse cultures. The main aim of the World Summit on the Information Society was to balance the need to be part of the digital world with the constraints of development, for all countries, in particular the most vulnerable ones. It was to be hoped that the conclusions of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms for Information and Communication Technologies would be made available in time to be considered during the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

42. Preparations for the second phase were proceeding well both on the substantive and material levels. At the first Preparatory Committee meeting held at Hammamat, Tunisia, from 24 to 26 June 2004, a decision had been taken on the structure, output and schedule for the World Summit. The Government of Tunisia, which was firmly committed to the successful outcome of the Summit, called on representatives of international and regional civil society and the private sector to participate actively in the preparatory work. It was to be hoped that the revised version of the draft resolution on the Summit (A/C.2/59/L.32) would be adopted unanimously.

43. At the sixtieth session, the ITU report on the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society would be submitted to the General Assembly and examined in plenary. That would allow the results of the World Summit on the Information Society to be placed in the general context of the results expected from the major events to take place in 2005, since the Millennium Development Goals, would not be fully realized without a solution to the issue of the digital divide.

44. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 44, reaffirmed the potential of information and communication technologies as powerful tools to foster socio-economic development and to contribute to the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and acknowledged the generous offer of Tunisia to host the second phase of the Summit. The Group of 77 and China urged all Member States, relevant United Nations bodies, including the

Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, civil society and the private sector to contribute to the preparatory process of the Tunis phase of the Summit, as well as to the Summit itself to ensure its overall success.

45. The Group of 77 and China extended their support to the draft resolution originally submitted by Tunisia and Switzerland, as revised to reflect the agreed outcome of consultations with all interested Member States (A/C.2/59/L.32), and again called on the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special fund established by ITU to support the preparations for and holding of the Summit.

46. With reference to agenda item 92 (a), the Group noted that UNITAR provided training for personnel from both developed and developing countries and had recorded a significant increase (from 6,000 to 7,800) in the number of beneficiaries of its seminars, workshops and conferences. The growing popularity of the training activities, gauged by the number and diversity of the programme participants, showed that the Institute was providing a useful service to Member States. The programmes were diversified, took place in different parts of the world and in some cases were tailor-made to suit the requirements of beneficiaries. In that regard, the Group of 77 and China appreciated the partnership approach in implementing fellowship programmes and hoped that other relevant core development issues of interest to developing countries would be included.

47. With regard to its training activities in New York, the Group of 77 and China commended UNITAR for the quality of its programmes, but was of the view that the Institute should find ways to maximize its use of time, for example by shortening its courses to allow participants from developing countries to attend more programme and training activities, particularly during major events in New York.

48. Although the financial situation of the Institute had improved owing to the stable contributions to and performance of special purpose grants, contributions to the General Fund remained precariously low. That severely inhibited the capacity of the Institute to render more service to Member States, particularly developing countries. For the Institute to offer better services, its funding had to increase and should come from diverse sources. Emphasis should also shift from special purpose grants to the General Fund. The lingering problem of the rental and management costs of the premises used by UNITAR also needed to be resolved to enable UNITAR to channel its resources to its training activities.

49. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that information and communication technologies were extremely powerful tools for promoting development and created enormous employment opportunities. Such technologies were the most dynamic force behind globalization and their importance was underscored by the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society. The Summit Declaration of Principles reaffirmed the commitment of all stakeholders to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society harnessing the potential of information communication technologies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

50. Given the widespread inequality in access to information and communication technologies, the challenge facing the developing world was how to harness the potentialities of the technologies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Regional integration could significantly contribute to the rapid and equitable development of the global information society by bridging the digital divide and strengthening national capacity-building. Consolidating regional cooperation in order to build information societies was one of the main goals of the World Summit on the Information Society.

51. Bangladesh had placed poverty alleviation at the top of its development agenda, and information and communication technologies could play a catalytic role in that regard. It had a comprehensive national policy on information and communication technologies and aimed to build national society driven by information and communication technologies and based on knowledge by the year 2006. The country was fostering a countrywide information and communication technologies network, and the aim of the Government was to build a competitive information society making good use of the country's best elements. But, while the country had a vast reservoir of talent to be tapped, it lacked the necessary infrastructure to utilize that human capital.

52. He praised the activities of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and in

particular its recently adopted Business Plan for 2004. However, the overall success of the Task Force depended on comprehensive support by all stakeholders, including Governments, civil society, the private sector, United Nations system organizations and other international and intergovernmental organizations. The key challenge was to ensure that the least developed countries were not left out of the development potential of information and communication technologies, and to that end adequate financial and technical assistance were critical to strengthening the human capacity and building infrastructure in the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries.

53. **Mr. Moret** (Switzerland), speaking on agenda item 44, said that during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society one of the objectives had been to find an effective way of using the potential of new information and communication technologies for everyone's advantage. A Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action, which had pointed out the path to be followed in order to make that vision come true, had been adopted by consensus. However, during the first phase, important issues, such as Internet governance and the provision of financing mechanisms suited to the challenges of information and communication technologies for development had not been resolved.

54. The working group and Task Force expressly established to study those questions in depth would submit the results of their work to Member States during the various preparatory periods for the Summit's second phase. A two-part Summit was a unique opportunity to address all questions globally, and to ensure that the advantages of new information and communication technologies benefited everyone. Particular attention would have to be paid to the challenges confronting the least developed countries.

55. Speaking on agenda item 92 (a), he said that UNITAR played an important role in the United Nations system, particularly by providing access to specialized knowledge dispersed in the vast network of the United Nations system and making it available to persons attending its courses. The network that UNITAR had been able to establish inside the United Nations system, together with its teaching experience and knowledge of the needs of beneficiaries, had enabled the Institute effectively to help developing countries and transitional economies, as well as developed countries, in the various multilateral processes. The assistance was often tailor-made to meet the specific requirements of the different actors.

56. Switzerland particularly appreciated the commitment of UNITAR to the environment and sustainable development. The Institute had programmes on environmental law, climate change and chemicals and waste management, in particular in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel international conventions on chemicals and wastes. Switzerland greatly appreciated the collaboration of UNITAR with the Chemical Cluster in Geneva and actively supported all close collaboration of the Institute with the multilateral environmental agreements.

57. Switzerland had supported the training programme on the legal aspects of debt and financial management since its creation in 1987, because it answered the training and capacity-building needs of governmental officials and debt managers, in particular in very poor, highly indebted countries. The programme had been able to benefit from the new information technologies. An evaluation of the programme in 2004 had confirmed the need for training in debt management and showed the relevance of the UNITAR approach, the soundness of its partnerships and effectiveness of its programmes.

58. UNITAR deserved political and financial support from Member States, since it did not receive any direct funding from the United Nations regular budget. The Institute was trying to secure financing from voluntary contributions, either from the General Fund or from the Special Purpose Grant Fund. While the financing of programmes from the Special Purpose Grant Fund was relatively satisfactory, funding from the General Fund remained precarious and threatened the smooth functioning and autonomy of the Institute. For its part, Switzerland, as one of the principal donors, would continue to support both the General Fund and the Special Purpose Grant Fund.

59. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that geothermal energy and sustainable use of marine resources were fundamental to Iceland's prosperity and were issues which Iceland worked on actively in the international context. Iceland had sought to share its experience with other countries by hosting two UNU programmes providing training on key aspects of sustainability: the

Geothermal Training Programme, established in 1978, and the Fisheries Training Programme, founded in 1998. The aim of the Geothermal Training Programme was to assist developing countries with significant geothermal potential in building up expertise on most aspects of geothermal exploration and development. The aim of the Fisheries Training Programme was to assist developing countries in promoting sustainable development in their fisheries sectors.

60. Over the years, the Government of Iceland had placed special emphasis on UNU programmes in Iceland, which were an integral part of Iceland's development policy and its efforts to honour the commitments made at the Johannesburg Summit. The programmes accounted for the largest financial contribution that Iceland gave to a single United Nations agency, and he was proud to announce that in 2005 the Icelandic authorities intended to increase the contribution considerably.

61. **Ms. Robinson-Regis** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on agenda item 92 (a) on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that were Members of the United Nations, said that those States were heartened to note that the financial viability of UNITAR had become less of a critical issue than it had been over the years, thanks to the significant increase in special purpose grants. CARICOM member States wished, however, to express their concern at the progressive decline in the level of voluntary contributions to the General Fund, representing a mere 4.5 per cent of the Institute's budget, which would negatively affect the continuation of some of the programmes offered. The reluctance of donors to increase levels of non-earmarked contributions would eventually steer the Institute away from the core activities of its original mandate and thus threaten the long-term viability of the Institute when the objectives of the special purpose contributions had been achieved. The CARICOM countries thus called on traditional donors to resume contributions to the General Fund and hoped that an effective solution would be found as a result of the deliberations of the Fifth Committee on the issue of rental and maintenance costs for the Institute's premises.

62. CARICOM member States were encouraged by the effective participation of UNITAR in the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the World Summit on the Information Society. They hoped to benefit further from the Institute's interventions in such areas as information and communication technology for capacity development, distance learning, e-government and governance. At the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, they had suggested the establishment and/or enhancement of the modalities for the delivery of programme activities to target groups in the Caribbean subregion in situ. That might be achieved by a combination of activities conceived within the context of the decentralized cooperation programme and the Institute's tailor-made programmes.

63. CARICOM member States also advocated programme activities that extended training and capacity-building interventions for sustainable development beyond the current scope of those related to chemical and waste management, particularly in view of the following 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action in Mauritius in January 2005.

64. Speaking on agenda item 44, she said that members of CARICOM were appreciative of the efforts of the Secretariat in providing documentation in response to General Assembly resolution 57/295, on information and communication technologies for development. They looked forward to the report on the outcome of the deliberations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) on the implementation of the resolution. CARICOM delegations welcomed the efforts within the system to develop a comprehensive information and communication technologies (ICT) strategy; those efforts had resulted in noticeable improvements in the Organization's delivery of information technology products and services to delegations in the recent past, particularly through easier access. The CARICOM delegations noted with satisfaction the focus on areas such as information exchanges and partnerships that were conducive to greater efficiency, as well as the specific initiatives for information retrieval, knowledge and information-sharing and procurement. They were also supportive of the work being undertaken by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force with the Chief Executives Board that should result in an integration of ICTs into development assistance portfolios and programmes and enhancement of the coordination of multilateral initiatives.

65. Trinidad and Tobago's National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy was an integral part of a development vision which, among other things, provided for evolution to a knowledge-

based society by 2008. The Strategy complemented and built on her country's development vision, aimed at achieving developed country status by 2020.

66. The Millennium Declaration had acknowledged the crucial role of information and communication technologies in the realization of development objectives. Similarly, in recognition of the vast potential of ICT for enhancing and integrating societies, as well as for driving the trade and economic agenda, particularly in the case of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), the member States of CARICOM had paid particular attention to the incorporation of initiatives in that sector into their planning framework. The CARICOM Heads of Government had adopted the CARICOM ICT/Connectivity Agenda 2003 and Platform for Action as a two-year plan. The Platform, which was structured around the three fundamental pillars of government, the private sector and civil society, had four main components: governance; public education and awareness; e-learning; and capacity-building.

67. Elements of the Platform had been further elaborated by a Working Group on ICT and submitted to the Third Special Meeting of CARICOM Ministers responsible for Information and Communication Technology, held in October 2004 in Barbados. The Ministers had reaffirmed a commitment to an aggressive and focused strategy that called on CARICOM to adopt a fresh approach to ICT policy and regulation, capacity-building, research and innovation. The Meeting had also approved an ICT action plan for immediate specific actions, with complementary activities and targets to be met by the third quarter of 2005.

68. Against that background, CARICOM member States were preparing for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. They supported fully the core outputs of the first phase, contained in the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action and looked forward with interest to the reports of the Working Group and Task Force mandated by Heads of Government to deliberate on the outstanding issues of Internet governance and financing mechanisms.

69. The CARICOM countries also looked forward to the proposed Caribbean Regional Forum on the Information Society to be organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations ICT Task Force.

70. **Mr. Bourisly** (Kuwait) said that one of the major challenges facing Member States involved the training of human resources, an area in which UNU and its research centres played a central role by supporting the United Nations in addressing global issues of human security and development and by providing training to researchers in issues of relevance to the United Nations. His delegation hoped that research on development would continue, particularly for the benefit of those Member States that depended on a single source of revenue.

71. His country, which had a continuing commitment to education and training, had participated in that endeavour through the presence of one Kuwaiti national as a member of the UNU Council and of another on the Board of Trustees of UNITAR, which had a major role to play in training members of diplomatic missions accredited to the United Nations and throughout the United Nations system. His delegation had been pleased to participate, together with the delegations of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, in one of the courses provided by UNITAR on diplomacy and multilateral international relations and would be pleased to participate further in the work of the University and of UNITAR.

72. **Mr. Jenie** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN was moving towards a knowledge-based economy through the implementation of the e-ASEAN initiative, which attached high priority to development of the ASEAN information infrastructure, as well as e-commerce and e-government. In most ASEAN member countries, ICT development still required the improvement of infrastructure and human resources. For that reason, ASEAN viewed the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force as an important mediator in bridging the digital divide. ASEAN had been particularly encouraged to note the collective interest in defining a shared vision of the information age displayed during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, and looked forward to the second phase of the Summit.

73. ASEAN considered it a priority to develop regional action to enhance national and international efforts. In August 2004 in Bangkok, the ASEAN

Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers had held their fourth meeting to further cooperation in ICT development. Cyber-security was also being advanced. Each ASEAN country had undertaken to establish a national Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT). A standard operating procedure for information-sharing among ASEAN members had been developed to ensure a coordinated response to cyber-threats. In 2004, the e-ASEAN Business Council had been established. The ASEAN ICT Ministers had held a fruitful dialogue with its members on topics such as infrastructure and e-learning accreditation and were expected to hold regular dialogues with them and other relevant private sector representatives to enhance ICT development in the region. Significant progress had also been made in broadening and deepening relations with China, Japan, Korea and India. Further cooperation and collaboration would cover the areas of broadband deployment, cyber-security capacity-building, ICT use for the disabled and elderly, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and virtual network of software multilingualization.

74. ASEAN was committed to further developing the ICT sector and realizing the targets in the e-ASEAN Framework Agreement, through the World Summit on the Information Society as well as through national and regional programmes. It was looking forward to working closely with the United Nations, including the ICT Task Force and other related agencies, as well as with the private sector to minimize duplication of activities and ensure synergies among the various ICT programmes.

75. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that access to knowledge was a basic human right that could not be denied or smothered. Information and communication technologies must reach all, particularly the most vulnerable segments of humanity, who lived in the least developed countries, the landlocked countries and the small island States. The least developed countries (LDCs) were facing the danger of increased marginalization as access to global networks, new information technologies and connectivity had widened the digital divide. The urgent and immediate question was how technology could change the lives of the poor.

76. It was in that context that special attention was needed for Africa, where 34 out of 50 LDCs were located. A few years previously, for most Africans, there had been one public telephone for 17,000 people. Most calls between African countries were still routed through Europe or the United States. At present, Africa's economic performance was raising hope for a possible turnaround. While the economies were still fragile and the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor nations might appear wide, the growth of mobile cellular and wireless technology had helped Africa and its LDCs to enter the information age. The international community must direct its newly gained technological energies towards development. That could be achieved through political will and leadership, education and capacity development, and dissemination of information and knowledge.

77. Development partners could assist by sharing technology, both hardware and software, with the least developed countries. Those countries should be supported with resources and technology to reach the targets agreed in the Brussels Programme for increasing computer literacy among students in higher institutions and universities and increasing average telephone density. The digital solidarity fund proposed by President Wade of Senegal in 2003 at the World Summit on the Information Society deserved full support to become operational, particularly for the benefit of the most vulnerable countries. At the same time, it was vital for training and job growth to support the infrastructure. The power of technology could be harnessed to provide new applications for the benefit of the vulnerable countries through development in agriculture, growth in small businesses, use of computers for security and combating terrorism and towards effective governance.

78. For the LDCs, it was vital to be involved in the global process of change and transformation by implementing their national plans, mapping out the road to progress and setting up signposts of success. While his Office continued to engage in advocacy and outreach activities for the vulnerable countries, through both conventional and electronic methods of communication, technology would not have its desired impact in the future if the basic needs of the poor and disadvantaged were not met. He urged the technologically advanced countries to engage their resources and creative energies in assisting the least developed countries to build their technology infrastructure and expertise.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.